What A Life!

A Subtly Miserable Journey

A Short Story

By

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How To Quote From Books?

Whenever you want to quote something from a book, use the page number, line number and word number.

So, the three basic numbers are,

1. Page Number
2. Line Number
3. Word number

Please note that the “Line Number” in here is the line number of a page. All valid lines should at least include one word in it. Also, line numbering does not count the header, footer or any footnote in that page. So, out of the content of that page, starting with number 1 from top to bottom, any line with at least one word in it, is a valid line.

Also note that the word number is, the number of the word in a line. In each line, word count starts with number 1 from left to right.

Based on the published versions, there are two additional numbers to consider when quoting from a book. Those are,

1. Edition Number (You may use the ISBN or ASIN if editions have separate numbers)
2. Volume Number

Please read this whole section to the end to read about the explanation on how to use these numbers to quote from a book.

Let's look at basic ways of quoting something from the book. For example, if I want to quote the word "*Book*" in the title of this section, then you may quote it as follows,

"*What A Life!: Page i: Line 1: Word 5*" or "*What A Life!: i:1:5*". This is equal to the word "*Book*".

If you want to quote the whole title of this section at once, then use a word range from the first word to the last word of the title as follows,

"*What A Life!: Page i: Line 1: Word 1 to Page i: Line 1: Word 5*" or "*What A Life!: i:1:1—i:1:5*". This quotation is the same as quoting the sentence: "*How to Quote from Books?*"

In the same way, you may quote as many words, lines and pages as needed at once.

To quote a range of pages, use the following method,

"*What A Life!: Page i to Page vi*" or "*What A Life!: i—vi*". This is equal to the six pages which contain this whole section called "*How to Quote from Books?*".

Similarly, to quote specific pages, you may use the following method (you may include multiple page numbers separated by commas.),

"*What A Life!: Page i, Page vi*" or "*What A Life!: i, vi*". This quote is equal to two pages numbered '*i*' and '*vi*' which contains the first and the last page of this section on "*How To Quote From Books?*". You may also use a combination of comma-separated page numbers and page ranges to quote everything you want at once.

Similarly, to quote a paragraph or any range of lines, use the following format.

"*What A Life!: Page i: Line 2 to Page i: Line 3*" or "*What A Life!: i:2—i:3*". This is equal to the first paragraph of this section which has only two lines.

Also, to quote specific lines, you may use the following method (you may include multiple line numbers separated by commas.),

"*What A Life!: Page i: Line 2, Line 3*" or "*What A Life!: i:2,3*". This quote also equals to the two lines which contain the first paragraph of this section. You may also use a combination of comma-separated line numbers and line ranges to quote everything you want at once.

So, the most complex form of a quote you can make with this method is to point to some content in a book that starts with one specific word and ends with another specific word, as follows,

"*What A Life!: Page i: Line 2: Word 1 to Page i: Line 03: Word 8*" or "*What A Life!: i:2:1—i:3:8*". This quote also

equals to the first paragraph of this section which only has two lines.

This manner of quoting will make sure everyone from everywhere refers to the same content of a book while quoting from its content.

If there are multiple editions of a book, then you may also mention the edition number along with the title of the book itself. For example, to quote from the first edition of the book, use the following method,

"*What A Life!—First Edition: Page i: Line 2: Word 1 to Page i: Line 03: Word 8*" or "*What A Life!—1st Ed.: i:2:1—i:3:8*". This quote also equal to the first paragraph of this section called "*How To Quote From Books?*" in the first edition of this book titled "*What A Life!*".

Similarly, if you are reading a split edition, which means a book that is published in multiple volumes, then please refer to the volume number after the edition number. For example, to quote from the first volume of the first edition, use the following method,

"*What A Life!—First Edition—Volume I: Page i: Line 2: Word 1 to Page i: Line 03: Word 8*" or "*What A Life!—1st Ed.—Vol. I: i:2:1—i:3:8*". This quote also equal to the first paragraph of this section called "*How To Quote From Books?*" in the first volume of the first edition of this book titled as "*What A Life!*".

Alternatively, if the editions have separate identification numbers, then you may use the ISBN number or the ASIN number instead of the edition number to quote from a specific edition of the book.

Please note that when the edition number is not present along with the title of the book, consider that quote is from the first edition of the book. Therefore, whoever is quoting from a later edition of the book other than the first edition must include the edition number or edition name along with the title of the book. This is a must when someone is quoting from a book using this method.

About This Book

This is a short story about the life of a normal person who became a recluse. This short story tries to look deeper into the dynamics of an unenlightened mind of a mundane person to see how that person struggles with decision making even if that person has chosen a spiritual life. This also tries to shed light on how hard to let go of our emotional attachments regardless of which path we take in our life.

The open ending with no proper conclusion was intended. The idea was to encourage the readers to think about the whole scenario in their own perspective and ask themselves the question “what would I do if I were him?”. Hence, the reinforced self-reflection based on this bold scenario.

About This Book

What A Life! is one of the many short stories in a short story collection which belongs to another book I am preparing to publish next year. I hope this short story will draw your attention to the upcoming book and in return, you will become more curious about it.

This is the first out of the six thought-provoking short stories to be released before that main book. Each short story will reveal and discuss certain aspects of current social issues and trends. Starting from April 2019, each book will be released bimonthly within the first week of that month.

Dedication

I Dedicate This Book To Everyone
And Everything That Is Existing,
Ever Existed And Will Someday
Come Into Existence.

[Author intentionally left this page blank]

What A Life!

A Subtly Miserable Journey

A man, after a proper education, gets a good job. He was a charming little boy and now he is a good-looking man. A few years later, he becomes successful, and he looks to settle down. He finds a woman and finally, he peacefully gets into a marriage with this woman.

A few years after the marriage they have children. Five years later he is a father of two beautiful and smart children. One is his daughter and the other one is his son. The couple is having the golden age of their lives and man is at the peak of his success. They have all they could dream for.

When everything is going so well, the man thinks about his life. This is a kind of self-reflection that everyone goes through at least once in their lifetime. At first glance, this is a harmless way to become self-aware and everyone got relieved after seeing the man thinks of himself after a long life of continuous hard work for his success.

So, this man does all sort of various things to pass this phase of his life. He reads books, listens to music, plays various games, travels around the country and watches films and TV more often. The man is trying to avoid deep reflection by focusing on entertainment.

He feels something is missing and something is entirely not right. However, he has nothing else to worry about but he wants this void to go away. So, he keeps using those temporary means to change his focus towards something else because then he doesn't have to think about the emptiness he feels from within.

However, he is certain that this will not go away. Something is missing. He tries everything but nothing works out. He couldn't fill the void. So, what is it? This is the same

question that most men ask from themselves when they are in the mid-life crisis.

He has everything but something is missing. He does not understand what that missing thing is. Hence, like everyone else, this man gradually turns towards religion. He goes through all the religions, not just one. The man obsessively tries to find meaning. He studies the basics of all religions and tries to figure out what this emptiness is all about. After some time, he realises this is also like another method of keeping the focus away from the real issue. Instead of entertainment, this time he uses religious education to keep him distracted.

So, he got bored, confused, hopeless and felt worthless. All the signs of tension and depression are there in him. He got burned out for no good reason. He can't figure out the missing part. Kids are growing older and they are doing well in their studies. Everyone seems happy except him. He suddenly finds the life he had dreamed of, and already achieved, has become a challenge. The man was okay and doing well so far but now this unknown element keeps tingling him all the time.

He thinks about death and all the suffering. The man feels miserable when he becomes self-aware of the chaos among all the species, especially humans. Then he wonders “why do we have to do all this?” and contemplates on “why we do what we do?”. At first, he gets away by thinking he’s doing everything for his family. Especially for his children. However, after a few days, he couldn’t lie to himself any longer.

He does not understand why he’s doing everything and what for. The man finds no purpose or a reason. He’s already miserable while having a perfect family and a perfect life that others could only dream about and be jealous of. But this wasn’t enough for him. He doesn’t even know why. The man sees death everywhere, and he resents bringing two children into this world to face the same fate of suffering and death. He feels all the effort as suffering because he realises that he has to put a continuous effort just to survive and maintain his status.

He’s in the brink of losing it all. He had enough. One day suddenly he realises he had enough. He totally loses it. He thinks about all the options he could take, then he leaves

his job, transfer most of his belongings, wealth and assets to his family and he gives away the rest for charity. Within a day, he takes himself from the state of a person who's living his dream to one who has nothing for himself.

Now he has nothing for himself. He has no money, assets or anything. He doesn't even have a square inch of land for himself. So, he has nowhere else to go. Obviously, there's no one else who fully understands the situation but his family is always supportive and keeping him close to them regardless of his downfall. However, in reality, he's just a poor person who has nothing for himself. He only has his family, friends and their care for him. One would say, that is more than enough for one to survive.

In this worst kind of situation, he finds it difficult to stay alive and feels the guilt of putting his family in this bad situation. His wife is a wise and smart woman. She can take care of the family even with no support from him. Even though his family can take care of its own, it's inevitable that this change has some adverse effect on his family. However, his need for answers and the relentless craving to

fill the void within him overshadows everything else including the guilt he felt earlier.

He becomes self-righteous and defends his own view. After some time, he sees the complications, and he feels the urge to do something about it. Finally, he realises the only way to do this is to fill the void within. He takes a decision to do everything he can to figure this out and to get over with it once and for all. Then he takes a decision to leave his family. He says goodbye to everyone and leaves the house expecting never to return.

Few days after that, he becomes a monk of one of the profound religions to follow one singular path to end his suffering. He has already realised that last time he scattered his focus towards everything with no good outcome, therefore this time he picks a single path. The man does everything he can to learn all the techniques and lessons as quickly as he can. He learns old scriptures, meditation methods and all the views. He learns really quickly and masters meditation, then he finds out how to prolong calmness in his mind.

He's virtuous and on the path to end the suffering. He's determined never to look back and to finish what he started, no matter what the cost is. He gives up all his desire and puts all his effort towards achieving the ultimate realisation. He feels like he will make it. He also realises that even though now he can continuously keep the calmness and tranquillity of his mind, he hasn't achieved the final realisation, yet.

He's all good, and he has given up everything. He is so happy about it but still; he hasn't given up the desire to fill his void. He hasn't given up the relentless craving to know it all and to figure out the ultimate realisation that can fill his emptiness. Even though he's always thinking he's in the right path, he still feels the tiredness which comes with the endless effort he put towards it. He didn't question it, yet.

One day suddenly someone comes to meet him. Only a few knew where he is and the person who came to meet him, who is a close friend of his family, is one of those few. It is a sad news, some strangers took his daughter. Earlier he felt like he was well ahead of the rest of the monks in finding the truth but now he questions him for all the fatherly

duties he left behind. He couldn't commit to his family, and now he thinks he did not protect his daughter.

He's calm but still shaken by the news. A slight glimpse of guilt tingles within him but he stays true to his new life and keeps the calmness. He does what everyone else does to inform the police and asks for help from everyone he could. Some people suggest maybe his daughter willingly went out with them. Some others say they kidnapped her for a ransom. But how can a monk pay for a ransom when he has nothing at all? After a while, he figures out no sufficient information or satisfactory results are coming from anyone he contacted.

He takes the matter into his hand. Even though he's a monk, he still can go out, question people and find his daughter. He uses his above-average status in the society that comes with his monkhood to find his daughter. After a few days, he successfully locates his daughter. First, he contacts everyone he knows, but in the meantime, he gets a message from her kidnapper. The kidnapper asks him to come to a place if he needs to see his daughter alive. He accepts it.

His calmness, years of training as a monk makes him a resilient person who feels no fear. He goes into the place alone, then he suddenly sees his daughter lying on the ground. She has grown quickly to become a beautiful young girl. It's no wonder anyone would think about her beauty and wants her. Is her beauty responsible for this trouble?

This is the first time he sees his daughter after he got ordained. Since no one knew about his whereabouts, this is the first time his daughter sees him as a monk in a robe, too. She looks at her father and cries, but it's hard to determine why she is crying. Maybe it's because she saw her father after a long time. Maybe she got surprised by seeing him as a monk. Maybe it's because of the situation she's in right now. Whatever the reason is, she looks devastated.

The kidnapper approaches along with some of his goons. As a monk, he sees this kidnapper and goons as Mara and his army, which he was longing to defeat. One goon stands next to his daughter and removes her clothes one by one. Suddenly the kidnapper speaks.

[The Kidnapper]

“Well, well, look who’s here! A monk to rescue his daughter?”

“Is a monk allowed to have a daughter?”

“Anyway, aren’t you the one who left her behind already? Why come now?”

Even though he’s a monk, as a father he was speechless.

While the goon next to his daughter removes her clothes one by one, the kidnapper takes a pistol out and removes its bullets, then puts one bullet into the pistol and throws it at him. Rest of the goons suddenly point guns at him. And the kidnapper says,

[The Kidnapper]

“Take the gun! Pick it up!”

“It has one bullet, and it fires the soon you pull the trigger.”

“Pick it up and shoot him before he rapes your daughter!”

The kidnapper points to the goon standing next to the daughter. His daughter is lying on the ground, helplessly crying while the goon touches her.

Yes, he's a monk, but he was a father first. He suddenly picks up the pistol, then points the pistol at the goon and shouts,

[The Monk]

"Get away from her!"

The kidnapper talks again,

[The Kidnapper]

"You left her! You couldn't protect her!"

"Why this sudden caring? What changed?"

"Who's holding the gun? Is it the father or the monk?"

He suddenly comes back into reality and thinks about the oaths and all the teachings he went through. He thinks about the principles and rules he follows. He's ashamed, feels the guilt of both not being able to protect his own daughter and not being able to protect his oaths and

principles. He fears both his behaviour and the fact that he's holding a pistol pointed at another human being.

He's already confused with everything that goes through his mind and he suddenly notices the anger he feels within. Then he notices the thoughts of killing, which suddenly comes and goes through his mind. He doesn't feel the void anymore. His emptiness is no more but now he is full of rage and confusion. He's not ready to shoot the goon, yet.

What happened to the fearless monk?

Is he afraid?

The kidnapper breaks the silence again,

[The Kidnapper]

"Tick Tock, well, what's it going to be? What are you going to do now, 'monk'?"

The goon next to his daughter touches her more and more. It's hard to look at the ashamed, naked body of his crying daughter who's already afraid of the situation. She is about to get molested by this goon who keeps touching her more and more. The kidnapper talks again.

[The Kidnapper]

“Okay, let me make this clear.”

“I’ll help you decide.”

“You are a monk and you can’t kill another, can you?”

“And there is no time to disrobe, so, I believe whatever you do you have to do with the robe on.”

“You will surely lose it if you shoot anyone here, you know that right?”

“So, I’ll tell you your options.”

“Let’s see! Now here are the options you have!”

“One, you can shoot the guy touching your daughter and save her!”

“Two, you can shoot me!”

“Three, you can shoot any of the others who points a gun at you!”

“Four, you can shoot your daughter!”

“Five, you can shoot yourself!”

"Six, you can drop the pistol and watch what's happening. Maybe you'll enjoy the rest of the show!"

"Seven, you can drop the pistol and look away but you'll still hear her scream."

"Eight, you can drop the pistol and go back to wherever you came from because now you got nothing to do with her. You are a monk now, am I wrong?"

"Have I missed an option?"

"Is there anything else you could do?"

"Any magical or supernatural thing you can come up with?"

"Can't you use your years of training to do something about this?"

"Yeah, that's what I thought."

"You are hopeless!"

"Maybe more hopeless than this young lady, lying here, who we are about to devour."

"So, what is it going to be?"

“Are you going to do something about it or what?”

“Shall we continue then?”

He fainted.

The kidnapper approaches his still body, lying on the ground, and says,

[The Kidnapper]

“Well, that I didn’t expect!”

“Now what?”

About The Author

Nuwan Wijayaweera (1984) was born in Kurunegala, Sri Lanka. He is a Sri Lankan IT professional who worked for various Sri Lankan and Australian companies since 2008. He wrote posts and articles since 2014 and he has written many blog posts since then. Now he is working on his first major book, which contains logs from his life events and his personal philosophy towards life.